

# Call of the Canyon

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

## Fall Calendar of Events

### Bats: Masters of the Night

Eighteen species of bats call Washington County home. They are creatures so sophisticated, so adapted to their environment, so elusive, and so misunderstood. Join **Tom Haraden** of Zion National Park and learn about their natural history and their importance to our ecosystem.

**Friday, September 19  
6- 8:30 p.m.**

### Yoga on the Dunes: An Autumn Equinox Gathering

Experience poetry in motion. Breathe in the magic of the majestic red mountains. Breathe out your souls longing to share and practice the ancient art of balancing mind, body, and spirit. Join **Janice Brooks-Nichter** for a morning of yoga, storytelling, and meditation.

**Saturday, September 20  
9-10:30 a.m.**

### Evening Bike Ride

Enjoy a five-mile evening bicycle ramble along West Canyon Road led by Park Manager, Kristen Comella.

**Friday, September 26  
6:30-7:30 p.m.**

### Johnson Canyon Sketchwalk

Celebrate *Ivins Heritage Days!* Like early pioneers

who enjoyed this beautiful area, bring the family and join in this two-mile, roundtrip hike. Learn more about the human history of Johnson Canyon and the fun of nature sketching!

**Wednesday, October 1  
10- 11:30 a.m.**

### Sunset Hike

Explore the twilight sights and sounds of the canyon during a two-mile, roundtrip evening hike.

**Saturday, October 11  
6:15- 7:30 p.m.**

### Scorpions

Have you ever wanted to see a scorpion up close? Join us as we learn more about these amazing creatures and search for resident scorpions!

**Saturday, October 18  
7:30- 9 p.m.**

### Monsters in the Desert

Gila monsters are one of the most mysterious and endangered creatures of southwest Utah. Join **Ann McLuckie**, Wildlife Biologist, as she discusses the history and biology of these fascinating lizards. Find out how Gila monsters are studied using radio-telemetry and don't miss this opportunity to try radio tracking for yourself!

**Saturday, October 25  
9- 10:30 a.m.**

### Star Gazing Party

Join Laura Cotts, guest astronomer from SUU, for a starry evening in the Canyon! Learn about several fall constellations, as well as stories about the night sky.

**Saturday, November 1  
7:30- 9:00 p.m.**

### White Rocks Sketchwalk

Refine your 'eye for life' and express your passion for the Canyon on this 1.5-mile, roundtrip hike to explore the fun of nature sketching!

**Saturday, November 8  
9- 10:30 a.m.**

### Intro to Rappelling

Discover the thrill of rappelling down a cliff face! Professional climbing instructors will demonstrate and take you step-by-step through the vertical world of rappelling. All equipment and instruction provided by

### Paragon Climbing.

**Saturday, November 11  
2- 4 p.m.**

### Lava Tubes Tour

Join park staff for a two-mile roundtrip hike and the chance to explore the unique formations of a lava tube!

**Saturday, November 22  
9- 10:30 a.m.**

*All listed events are free and open to the public. Program registration is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the two days preceding the scheduled event. Please register by phone or in person. For more information or to register for a program contact park staff at (435)628-2255.*

### Did You Know:

...desert eco-systems rely on nectar feeding bats as primary pollinators of giant cacti, including the famous organ pipe and saguaro of Arizona.

...a single little brown bat can catch up to 1,200 mosquito-sized insects in just one hour.

...the pallid bat of western North America is immune to the stings of scorpions and even the seven-inch centipedes upon which it feeds.



*Pallid Bat*

## Snow Canyon State Park

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### Utah State Parks:

*Providing opportunities to enhance the quality of life by preserving natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.*



*Western Pipistrelle in Flight*



## The Western Pipistrelle: *Snow Canyon (and North America's) Smallest Bat*

Red rock cliffs glow in the setting sun as one of the most conspicuous mammals in Snow Canyon appears—the western pipistrelle. While its fluttering silhouette traces erratic paths across the sky, it is not surprising they are sometimes mistaken for large moths! Found throughout Utah in deserts and rocky habitats, the western pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus Hesperus*, is the smallest North American bat. Weighing slightly more than a penny, and even with their wings spread, they are only about the width of a human's hand.

Though one of thirteen species of bats documented in Snow Canyon State Park, the western pipistrelle is easy to identify because it is the most common bat seen at dusk. Although most bats are nocturnal, the western pipistrelle usually feeds in the late evening and early morning hours, while resting through the night. Intent on getting a head start on dinner, they have been seen as much as two hours before sundown! Western pipistrelles consume 20% of their body weight in insects per feeding. That is the equivalent of an adult person, weighing 140 lbs., eating 16 and a half Big Macs (or 35 lbs.) per meal! Thankfully for us, they prefer an assortment of swarming insects—including mosquitoes.

Shy, gentle and intelligent, bats have the distinction of being the only true flying mammal (and contrary to the beliefs of some, they are not 'flying mice' and not *remotely* related to rodents)! Actually, bats are such unique animals that scientists have placed them in a group all their own, called 'Chiroptera', which means hand-wing.

Western pipistrelles, like most bats, use a process called 'echolocation'. By transmitting calls and receiving echoes, they can locate prey, maneuver in the roost, and navigate in total darkness. The returning echoes from objects provide them with information on size, speed, shape and even direction of movement! Their calls are usually at frequencies too high for human ears

to hear.

Throughout time, people in many different cultures have feared bats, resulting in harmful superstitions and myths that have led to abuse and destruction of bats on alarming scales. Bat populations are declining worldwide. More than 50% of bats in the U.S. are listed as rare, threatened or endangered. Four species of bats documented in Snow Canyon State Park are 'state species of concern'.

Bats are especially vulnerable to extinction, in part, because they are the slowest reproducing mammals on earth for their size—most producing only one young per year! Western pipistrelles are fortunate in this regard because, after mating late September and early October, they usually give birth to twins the following summer.

Fortunately, people's attitudes towards bats are changing. Large organizations such as Bat Conservation International actively promote understanding and conservation of bats through education. Researchers are learning more about how vital bat's roles are in our environment—dispersing seeds, pollinating plants, and eating insects. Most bats eat insects that include disease-causing and crop-killing insects. Insect-eating bats help to reduce illness, crop loss, and the use of poisonous pesticides on food.

If you are a fan of produce such as bananas, mangoes, cashews, and avocados (to name a few!), then you have bats to thank for their role in making these available. More and more, people are attracting bats to their yards with bat houses and chemical-free landscaping so they can enjoy watching them, as well as have a natural control over many night-flying insects.

So, next time while enjoying a beautiful sunset in the canyon, you notice the flutter of a 'pip' on the wing—take a moment to appreciate the scope of benefits we enjoy because of this tiny creature and its kind.